Religions for Peace
UNITED KINGDOM

DIGNITY OF WOMEN in Bahá'í Faith

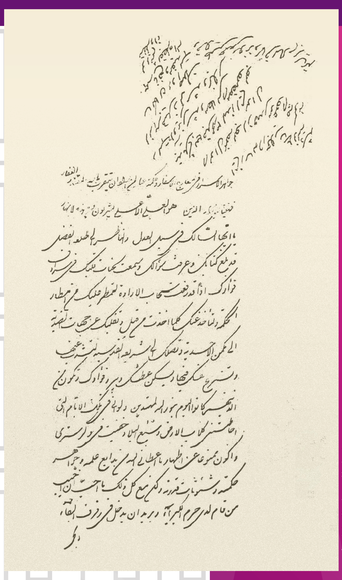


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The Bahá'í Faith was founded in 19th-century Persia. A central teaching is that humanity is like a bird with two wings — women and men — and both are needed for it to fly

"War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war... In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind."

— Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 108

"And among the teachings of His Holiness Baha'u'llah is the equality of women and men. The world of humanity has two wings — one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible."

— Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to the Hague, p. 7





"For mothers are the first educators, the first mentors; and truly it is the mothers who determine the happiness, the future greatness, the courteous ways and learning and judgement, the understanding and the faith of their little ones."

— Abdu'l-Baha,
Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 126

"There must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony."

— Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 108

Women of Faith in Action



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Bahiyyih Khanum (1846–1932)

the daughter of Baha'u'llah, was known as the "Greatest Holy Leaf." After the passing of Abdu'l-Baha, she served as the head of the Baha'i Faith during the interim before the Guardianship was established.

Lua Getsinger (1871–1916)

was an early Western Baha'is and a tireless teacher of the faith. She travelled across America, Europe, Middle East and India, and was named "Herald of the Covenant" by Abdu'l-Baha.



The Shrine of the Báb, Haifa

DIGNITY OF WOMEN in the Buddhist Religion



Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna— three streams of the Buddhist tradition, from Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia to China, Japan, Tibet, and Mongolia, and practised worldwide



"Women and men, both, if they cling to nothing at all, have done what had to be done, and have crossed the flood."

— Samyutta Nikāya 1.1, Pāli Canon



"In all phenomena, there is neither male nor female."

— Vimalakīrti Nirdesa Sūtra, Chapter 8



"The Bodhisattva does not perceive any distinction between male and female. Just as the sky does not differentiate, so the Bodhisattva looks upon all sentient beings equally."

— Śriputra's dialogue with the Goddess, Vimalakīrti Nirdesa Sūtra, Chapter 8

"What is so precious about being born a male? ... The female is no different from the male, so both male and female acquire the dharma without distinction... So do not think about such differences as male and female."

— Dōgen (1200–1253)



"There should be no discrimination among those who propagate Nam Myo Ho Renge Kyo in the latter day of the law, be they men or women."

— Nichiren (1222–1282)



The Vimalakīrti Sūtra, a Mahāyāna scripture, records a dialogue in which a goddess teaches Śriputra that enlightenment is not bound by gender

Women of Faith in Action

Sanghamittā
was the first woman to establish the order of nuns in Sri Lanka. She carried a sapling of the Bodhi tree from India and ordained Queen Anula and her companions, creating a lineage that continues today.
— Dīpavaṃsa

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī,
the Buddha's aunt and foster mother, became the first bhikkhunī, and the order of nuns — the Bhikkhunī Sangha — was established at her request.
— Aṅguttara Nikāya



The Potala Palaces in Lhasa

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DIGNITY OF WOMEN in Christianity



Throughout the many denominations of Christianity, the Bible and its teachings commend women for their service, support, and leadership

"So God created humans in God's image. In the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them."

— Genesis 1:27





Mary, the mother of Jesus, spoke these words when she visited Elizabeth: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed."

— Luke 1:46–48



At the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the priest Simeon blessed the child, and the prophet Anna proclaimed him.

— Luke 2:22-38

"There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher... She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem."

— Luke 2:36–38





Women of Faith in Action



Mary Magdalene followed Jesus from Galilee and supported his ministry (Luke 8:1–3), and was first among the others to witness the empty tomb in all four Gospels. **Phoebe** was a deacon of the church at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1); **Tabitha** was a disciple in Joppa, always doing good and helping the poor (Acts 9:36); and **Lydia** was a purple cloth merchant who opened her home to Paul and became the first named convert in Europe (Acts 16:14–15, 40).

Florence Li Tim-Oi (1907–1992)
was the first woman ordained priest in the Anglican Communion, serving wartime refugees in Macau when no male priest could reach them.

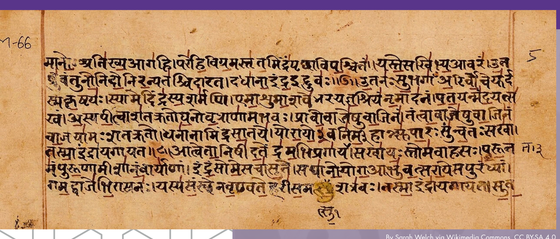
Mother Teresa (1910–1997)
founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, and spent her life serving the poorest of the poor. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.



Holy Sepulchre Church, Jerusalem

DIGNITY OF WOMEN in the

Hindu Religion ॐ



By Sarah Welch via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

Hinduism is a family of traditions with many scriptures. The Rig Veda, the Mahabharata, and the Manu Smriti name women as worthy of honour

Women appear in its sacred texts as voices of spiritual insight, and have shaped Hindu life through devotion, teaching and action



"Where women are honoured, there the Gods are pleased. But where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards."

— Manu Smriti 3.56

"There is no mode of life that is superior to serving one's mother."

— The Mahabharata

"May our prayers and worship be alike, and may our devotional offerings be one and the same."

— Rig Veda Samhita 10.191.3

"The teacher who teaches true knowledge is more important than ten instructors. The father is more important than ten such teachers of true knowledge and the mother is more important than ten such fathers. There is no greater guru than mother."

— Mahabharata, Shantiparva, Chapter 30, sloka 9



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, (CC0)



Goddesses of the Hindu tradition, where the divine feminine is central to the faith system: **Saraswati** (knowledge), **Lakshmi** (fortune), **Parvati** (motherhood), **Durga** (strength).

Women of Faith in Action

Anandibai Joshi (1865–1887)
was the first Indian woman to earn a degree in Western medicine. She trained in America and returned to India to serve women who would not see a male doctor.



by Rohit Sharma on Pexels

Kadambini Ganguly (1861–1923)
was the first Indian woman to practise Western medicine in India, and one of the first women to graduate from Calcutta University.



Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Madhya Pradesh

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DIGNITY OF WOMEN in Islam



The Qur'an and the recorded teachings of the Prophet Muhammad name women of faith in action, and the Prophet named four women as the best of Paradise



"The Prophet Muhammad named four women as the best of Paradise: Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, Fatimah bint Muhammad, Maryam bint 'Imran, and Asiyah bint Muzahim."
— Sunan Nasai 8297



"People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide."
— Qur'an 4:1





Women of Faith in Action

Khadijah, Fatimah, Maryam, and Asiyah
were named by the Prophet as the best of Paradise. Khadijah was a successful businesswoman who employed the Prophet before their marriage and was the first to accept his message; Fatimah nursed her father in his final illness and defended her inheritance; Maryam, the mother of Jesus, is honoured in the Qur'an as a woman of truth and devotion; and Asiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, refused to worship her husband as a god.
— Qur'an and Hadith

Arwa al-Sulayhi (c. 1048–1138)
ruled Yemen for over 50 years, and was the first woman to hold the title of hujja in Ismaili Shia Islam, the highest religious rank in the Yemeni da'wah.

Razia Sultana (1205–1240)
was the first woman to rule a Muslim state, serving as Sultan of Delhi from 1236 to 1240.

"Verily for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto God, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women... for all of them has God readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward."
— Qur'an 33:35

"I shall not lose sight of the labour of any of you who labours in My way, be it man or woman; each of you is equal to the other."
— Qur'an 3:195

"Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only the human beings of understanding are mindful."
— Qur'an 39:9



Kaaba, Mecca

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DIGNITY OF WOMEN in the Jain Religion



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (CC0)

Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions, rooted in the teachings of Lord Mahavir. Its scriptures name women as seekers of liberation, and Lord Mahavir ordained women as nuns



Antoine Taveneaux via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0



by Alka Jha on Pexels

"One who cultivates an attitude of equality towards all living beings, mobile and stationary, can attain equanimity. Thus do the kevalis say."

— Mahavira, Anuyogadvar 708, Gatha 2

"A truthful man is treated as reliable as the mother, as venerable as the guru, and as beloved as the one who commands knowledge."

— Mahavira, Mulachara 837

"It is the essential characteristic of the wise that they do not harm any living being. One should know that non-violence and the equality of all living beings are the main principles of religion."

— Sutra Krutaanga 1:4:10



Women of Faith in Action

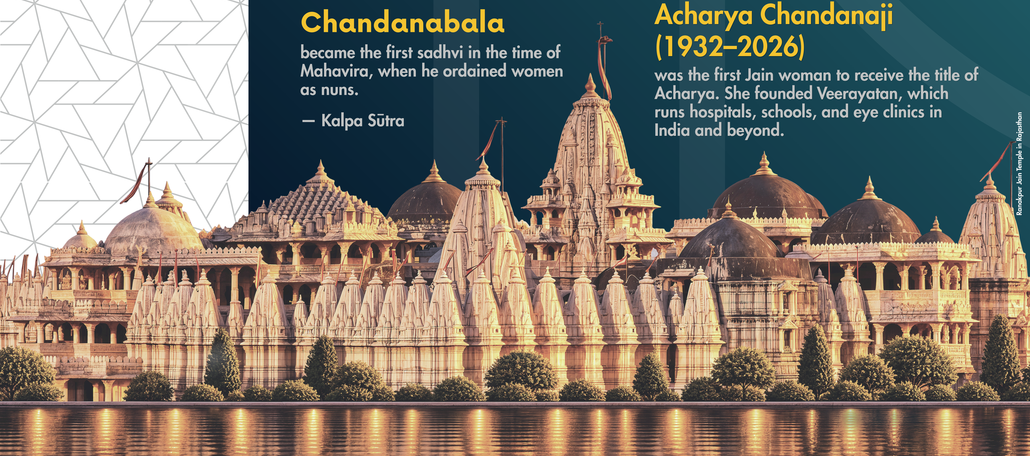
Chandanabala

became the first sadhvi in the time of Mahavira, when he ordained women as nuns.

— Kalpa Sūtra

Acharya Chandanaji (1932–2026)

was the first Jain woman to receive the title of Acharya. She founded Veerayatan, which runs hospitals, schools, and eye clinics in India and beyond.



Ranakpur Jain Temple in Rajasthan

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DIGNITY OF WOMEN in the Jewish Religion



The Hebrew Scriptures are the Tanakh: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, which bring forward accounts of women of faith in action, and name them as prophets, judges, and women of valour

"So God created humans in God's image. In the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them."

— Genesis 1:27



"Greater is the reward to be given by the All-Mighty to the righteous women than to righteous men."

— Berachot 17a







"A good woman who can find? She is far more precious than jewels... Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue... Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.'"

— Proverbs 31:10–31



"Now Deborah was a prophetess and judge who led Israel. Esther was a queen who saved her people from destruction, Miriam was named alongside Moses and Aaron as a leader, and Ruth was commended for her loyalty to Naomi and faithfulness to God."

— Tanakh



Women of Faith in Action

Deborah was a prophetess and judge who led Israel. **Esther** was a queen who saved her people from destruction, **Miriam** was named alongside Moses and Aaron as a leader, and **Ruth** was commended for her loyalty to Naomi and faithfulness to God.

— Tanakh

Regina Jonas (1902–1944)
was the first woman ordained as a rabbi, in Berlin in 1935. She continued to preach and care for the sick in Theresienstadt before her murder in Auschwitz.



The Western Wall in Jerusalem

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DIGNITY OF WOMEN in the Sikh Religion



by permission of Ravinder Kaur Nijjar

The Sikh Dharam was founded by ten Sikh Gurus between 1469 and 1708, beginning with Guru Nanak. Observing the wide-spread denigration of women, they recognised women as the true starting points of families, communities, empires and governments, and as society's spiritual guardians

"In a woman we are conceived; from a woman we are born.
With a woman we are betrothed, and with a woman we find friendship.
With a woman we journey through life and pave the way for future generations.
If she dies, we seek the companionship of another, and so we are bound to women.
Why then call woman inferior, when she gives birth to rulers and sovereigns?
From a woman a woman is born; none may exist without a woman,
None except the One True Creator."

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, ang 473



'The Guru is my Divine Mother, the Guru is my Divine Father. The Guru is my Supreme Divine Master.'

— Sri Guru Granth Sahib, ang 250

'She is the most noble of all the family. Wisely advising those older and younger than her. How blessed is that household, in which she has appeared. The awakened mind, in the home of the self. Servant Nanak observes in all humility - Such a wise and noble soul infuses peace in her abode.'

—Sri Guru Granth Sahib, ang 371

In the sacred scripture, revered as Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the soul of every human being is portrayed as a bride seeking union with the Divine. Infused with sacred virtues, she finds true strength and beauty and leads the way for others toward shared flourishing.

After Guru Gobind Singh Ji established the Khalsa in 1699, initiated Sikh women were given the brave and royal name 'Kaur'. Like Singh for men, Kaur affirms dignity, equality, and the potential for wise, courageous, and responsible leadership within us all.



Women of Faith in Action

Mata Khivi Ji,
wife of Guru Angad Dev Ji, led the institution of Guru ka Langar – where food is prepared and served free of charge to all who come, irrespective of background or status

Mata Sundari Ji,
the widow of the tenth Guru, guided the Khalsa for almost four decades after Guru Gobind Singh's departure from the world in 1708

Mata Sahib Kaur Ji
is honoured as the Mother of the Khalsa, the community of initiated Sikhs



Sri Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar

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DIGNITY OF WOMEN in the Zoroastrian Religion



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In the Gathas, the faith of Zarathushtra addresses men and women alike who follow the path of Truth

"Thy women worthy of reverence. We revere holy woman advanced in pure-thought, speech, and actions. We revere holy woman well instructed, virtuous, and capable of leadership."

— Aiwisruthrem Gah 9, Vispared 3.4

"I address words of advice to the brides, and to you, O bridegrooms, so listen carefully to these teachings. Being well versed in religious doctrines, learn to value the life of the Good Mind. May each of you strive with the other to attain Truth."

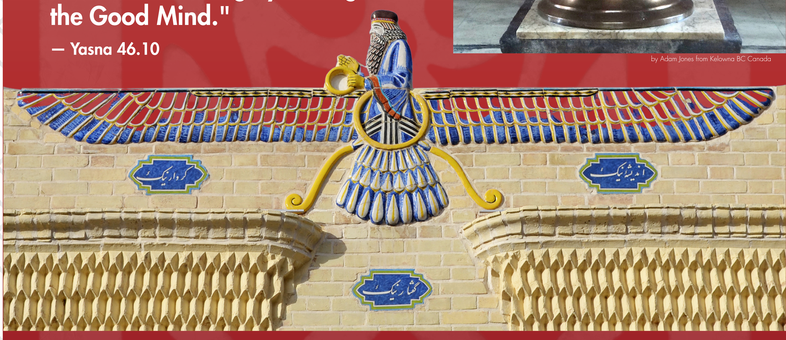
— Yasna 53.5

"O Mazda Ahura, that man or woman who gives me the life which You know to be the best, will receive the blessings of Truth and Your Sovereignty through the Good Mind."

— Yasna 46.10



by Adam Jones from Kelowna BC, Canada





Amin Berenjkar / Mehr News Agency, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0 (cropped from original)



Thorns via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0 (cropped from original)

Women of Faith in Action

Pouruchista
was the daughter of Zarathushtra, named in the Gathas. On the occasion of her wedding, he charged her to pursue good thinking, truth, and wisdom, and gave the same charge to the bridegrooms present.

Hutaosa
is named in the Avesta as the wife of King Vishtaspa, and is honoured in Zoroastrian tradition as a woman of faith and influence.



Fire Temple in Yazd